

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY:

Primary age children should be supervised going to/from and at the bus stop

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DoDDS-Europe believes that primary age children should have adult supervision, preferably by their parents, when they go to, while they are at, and when they return from the bus stop. Primary age children are usually defined as those aged five through eight, in kindergarten through grade three. Parents should also consult local command or community policies regarding child supervision, which may, in some cases, be more restrictive with regard to ages.

As a group, primary age children are the most vulnerable of all to accidents and injuries going to/from and at the bus stop. Being on their own before they are ready greatly increases the risk. Analysis of accidents and injuries involving primary age children going to/from and at the bus stop consistently reveals that they were unsupervised.

While older children are usually mature enough to go to and from the bus stop safely on their own, few primary age children are ready for that responsibility. No child is born “danger aware;” each must be taught how to recognize and avoid danger. Most primary age children not only need, but should have continuing adult supervision to keep them safe while they learn and mature.

In addition, being overseas significantly raises the risk factor. There are critical differences between the U.S. day-to-day school transportation environment and that found in the various nations of the DoDDS-Europe area. The unfamiliarity of the overseas environment itself can be overwhelming to a primary age child; that, plus the increased safety and security concerns, means that adult supervision is a must.

However, Don't Cause an Accident

The other side of the coin is that unsafe acts or behavior by adults can endanger the child and negate the positive effect of supervision. Too frequently, an adult's unsafe act or behavior causes an accident that injures the child.

The risk is avoidable and the following case shows what can happen.

The parent decides to pick up a first-grade son by car at the bus stop to save time in getting to an after-school appointment. The parent pulls up and parks across the street from the stop just as the bus arrives. From inside the bus, the boy sees his parent across the street; he gets off, runs in front of the bus and into the street toward his parent, is struck by an on-coming car and seriously injured. Who caused the accident?

Following a few key rules or guidelines will prevent most accidents involving primary age children going to/from and at the bus stop.

Going To and At The Bus Stop

1. If you walk, leave on time and follow a route that you have determined to be safe; walk at a pace that is comfortable to your child, not you; keep the route the same day-in and day-out and never take shortcuts.

2. If you drive, buckle up, leave on time and follow a safe route; always park at a spot that is well away from the area of the bus stop; then, get out of your car and walk your child to the stop—never drive up to or park at the stop itself to drop off your child.

3. Whether walking or driving, arrive at the stop before the bus gets there; if late, do not run, or attempt to chase or flag down the bus—it is better to miss the bus and be safe.

4. Stand with your child at the stop itself, well back from the curb and facing the point where the door of the bus will open; wait until the bus has stopped and the door has opened before allowing your child to board.

Meeting Your Child At And Departing From The Bus Stop

1. Whether walking or driving, arrive at the stop before the bus gets there; if driving, always park at a spot that is well away from the area of the bus stop; then, get out and walk to the stop—never drive up to or park at the stop itself to pick up your child.

2. Go to and stand at the stop itself, well back from the curb and facing the point where the bus will discharge your child—never wait across the street from the stop, or sit in your parked car.

3. As your child gets off the bus, go to and take charge of him/her, then move back and wait for the bus to leave before you and your child go.

4. If you walk, follow a route that you have determined to be safe and at a pace that is comfortable to your child, not you; keep the route the same day-in and day-out and never take shortcuts.

5. If you drive, buckle up and follow a safe route away from the area of the bus stop.

6. Teach your children that they must never cross the street or leave the bus stop to meet you—teach them to stay at the stop until you come to them.